

WILDLIFE SERVICES - OPERATIONS

PROGRAM PROFILE

Goal	Insure that high quality wildlife damage control technical and operational assistance is available for protecting agricultural, industrial, and natural resources, and to safeguard public health and safety through identification, demonstration, and application of the most appropriate methods of control.
Enabling Legislation	Authority exists under Animal Damage Control (ADC) Act of March 2, 1931, (7 USC 426-426b, and 426c as amended). Wildlife Services was transferred to USDA-APHIS from U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in December 1985, pursuant to PL 99-190; H.J. Res. 465, 99 Cong. 1st Sess. 1985. Transfer of personnel, property, records, and unexpended appropriations associated with program was completed by April 1, 1986.
Economic Significance	Protects America's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry from damage caused by wildlife. Improves public health and safety by providing protection from wildlife which constitute public health and safety hazards. Protects property and natural resources from wildlife damage.
Principal Approach And Methods Used to Achieve Goals	APHIS' Wildlife Services provides technical information, training, and assistance necessary for affected landowners and other cooperators to control damage caused by wildlife. For more complex and persistent damage problems, and where cooperative funding is provided, program specialists will conduct direct control operations to resolve them. The program uses a combination of physical, biological, and chemical control methods best suited for each situation.
History	Wildlife Services was part of USDA from 1931 until 1939, when it was transferred to USDI-FWS. In 1985, Congress transferred the program to USDA-APHIS. Since that time, APHIS has implemented a program organizational structure, established cooperative programs in the Eastern States, and placed increasing priority on controlling crop damage due to blackbirds and other migratory birds,

protecting threatened and endangered species from predation, and preventing wildlife-aircraft collisions at airports. On August 1, 1997 the program name was changed from Animal Damage Control, to Wildlife Services, to better represent the expanding scope of the program.

State and Local Cooperation

Many Federal, State, county, and private organizations cooperate in program activities.

Involvement of Other Agencies

FWS, Extension Service, Cooperative State Research Service, Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state wildlife management agencies, State health departments, and State agricultural agencies.

RESOURCE DATA

-----Obligations-----

	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Reimbursement</u>	<u>User Fees</u>	<u>Staff-Years</u>
FY 1996	26,764,984	23,200,128	--	472
FY 1997	27,344,275	27,498,589	--	320
FY 1998	28,988,802	30,026,579	--	341
FY 1999 (est.)	29,997,000	30,000,000	--	342
FY 2000 (est.)	28,161,000	31,800,000	--	306
	<u>APHIS</u>	<u>Coop</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Contingency Fund</u>
Cum.	\$333,844,665	\$227,178,673	\$561,023,338	\$1,927,976

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Protecting American Agricultural Resources

APHIS continues to work to protect sunflowers from damage caused by blackbirds in North and South Dakota. Forty-five to 70 million blackbirds migrate through the Dakotas each fall, resulting in a \$5 million loss to producers. Damage is often concentrated near cattail marshes where the birds roost. Since 1991, APHIS has been treating marshes to reduce the density of cattails, thereby, decreasing their attractiveness to migrating

blackbirds. The effects of the treatment last from 4 to 5 years or longer. In 1998, APHIS treated almost 6,500 acres of cattails. In addition, APHIS treated 463 sunflower fields totaling 153,102 acres to manage blackbird damage using DRC-1339 on rice bait. APHIS personnel also attended 6 regional workshops sponsored by the National Sunflower Association and various seed manufacturers where approximately 1,000 sunflower producers were provided technical assistance in managing bird damage. In total, APHIS assisted about 1,536 sunflower farmers in FY 1998 by treating cattails, baiting sunflower fields, loaning propane cannons, and providing technical assistance.

APHIS conducted livestock protection activities for the cattle, sheep, and goats in cooperation with State, Federal, and local governments, including private individuals, for more than 10,000 resource owners in FY 1998.

Cost-sharing continued to be emphasized while cooperators provided more than 50 percent of the total funding in this program area. Programs served producers located from California in the West to Virginia in the East. In addition to livestock protection activities, APHIS personnel responded to requests for assistance with crop damage caused by birds and timber damage caused by rodents.

Bovine tuberculosis is a concern to agricultural producers in Michigan. At the request of the Michigan Department of Agriculture in FY 1998, APHIS' WS removed part of a captive deer herd after bovine tuberculosis was confirmed in white-tailed deer on a private ranch in Presque Isle County. APHIS continues to work with the resource owner and State officials to ensure that the disease threat to livestock and other farm animals is abated. The project is slated for completion in September 2000.

As the Eastern Timber wolf population continues to increase in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin so has the number of requests for assistance with wolf predation. In response to requests and in accordance with the Eastern Timber wolf recovery plan, APHIS provides damage management assistance to livestock and other resource owners. In FY 1997, APHIS received 118 requests for assistance involving wolf predation to domestic animals. For FY 1998, APHIS received another 157 requests for

assistance for confirmed wolf predation. This represents a 30 percent increase over the previous year.

Protecting Human Health and Safety

APHIS worked closely with the State wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and local governments in addressing increased problems with non-migratory Canada geese in FY 1998. A primary concern in the Eastern and Central U.S., populations are increasing exponentially with numbers now exceeding 2 million birds. Problems include threats to air safety at airports and air bases, fecal contamination of water supplies and recreational beaches, and damage to lawns, turf areas, and agricultural resources.

Rabies in raccoons has spread up the East Coast and now threatens to move northward into Canada and westward across Ohio. In addition, coyote and fox rabies remain a threat to people, pets, and livestock in south Texas. APHIS is participating in joint efforts to establish rabies-free barriers to prevent the continuing movement of this infectious disease. APHIS established a Wildlife Rabies Management Team in FY 1998 to coordinate rabies control work in New York, Ohio, Texas, and Vermont. The primary cooperators and stakeholders include the State health departments, Cornell University, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of Georgia (Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the State wildlife agencies. Over 884,500 oral rabies raccoon vaccine baits have been distributed over a 3,770-square mile area in Ohio, New York, and Vermont in 1998. Surveillance sampling is used to determine program effectiveness. In Texas, APHIS cooperated in the implementation of a comprehensive oral rabies vaccination program for coyotes and gray foxes. This included cooperation in the distribution of 1.5 million vaccine/bait units in South Texas for the control of the canine rabies epizootic and, in central Texas, 1.1 million bait units for the control of the gray fox epizootic. The 2.6 million total baits were distributed over approximately 42,000 square miles. Results from surveillance programs conducted in March 1998 are still pending.

Collisions between aircraft and wildlife at airports have risen dramatically in recent years as a result of large population

increases in many wildlife species, faster airplanes, and the increase in air traffic. Wildlife strikes cost U.S. aviation more than \$300 million a year between 1992 and 1996. About 2,400 bird strikes to civil aircraft are reported each year and more than 2,500 strikes are reported by the U.S. Air Force. Since 1990, more than 300 deer collisions with aircraft have been reported to the FAA. Requests for assistance to manage wildlife hazards at airports and military air bases has continued to increase. APHIS personnel provided technical assistance to 291 airports and conducted 59 operational programs on 34 airports and military air bases in 1998. APHIS provided full-time assistance to O'Hare and Midway Airports in Chicago; Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky Airport; Dulles and Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington, DC; Orlando and Sarasota-Bradenton Airports in Florida. In addition, APHIS has full-time personnel stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri and Homestead Air Reserve Base in Florida.

During FY 1998, APHIS continued its efforts to reduce laughing gull strikes at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City. As a result of the operational gull management program, gull strikes to aircraft have been reduced by more than 80 percent between 1992 and 1998.

The cooperative program to prevent the inadvertent spread of the brown tree snake (BTS) from Guam to other Pacific Islands, Hawaii, and the U.S. mainland, continued under the direction of WS during FY 1998. During the year, the Department of Defense allocated \$1 million to help fund the BTS program at 11 military installations in Guam and Hawaii. APHIS has trained 14 Jack Russell terriers to detect snakes in outbound military and civilian cargo at transportation facilities. Wildlife specialists also use traps, glue boards, barriers, nighttime fence-line searches with spotlights, habitat modification, and prey-based removal to control the BTS. Since the primary thrust of the program is

to keep BTS out of Hawaii, a protocol has been established for responding to snake sightings in Hawaii, with APHIS designated as the lead Agency for responding to potential sightings.

Protecting Natural Resources

The recovery of gray wolves in western Montana, Central Idaho, and the Yellowstone National Park is succeeding beyond the expectations of wildlife biologists associated with this project. The number of wolves currently in the 3 areas is approaching 300, the target recovery goal. APHIS continues to play a key role in the recovery process by capturing wolves that attack or threaten livestock. Under the direction of the FWS, APHIS employees work on the ground and from aircraft to capture the wolves causing damage. In FY 1998, APHIS responded to over 50 incidents of suspected wolf predation on livestock in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.

APHIS continued cooperating with the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service in a program to protect reintroduced black-footed ferrets from predators in Badlands National Park and Conata Basin in South Dakota. In 1997, APHIS' work to remove predators resulted in a significant improvement in ferret survival. In 1998, APHIS provided training to National Park Service employees so that they could conduct the predator control activities.

APHIS continues to assist the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in recovery efforts for the Aleutian Canada goose, a threatened species. Introduced Arctic foxes have decimated traditional nesting populations of these geese on the Aleutian Island chain, and APHIS is assisting efforts to remove the fox from key islands. Efforts are already paying off. Goose populations are beginning to recover, and they are being considered for down listing from the endangered species list.

A new endangered species program for the protection of 10 threatened and endangered species were established in the Florida panhandle in June 1998, with approval of a APHIS action plan by supporting State and Federal agencies and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Protected animals include three species of sea turtles and a species of field mouse, among others. APHIS' actions will focus on coyote, fox, and feral cat predation management.

APHIS is cooperating with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the FWS, and the University of

Maryland Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit in developing a 3-year pilot program for managing nutria damage to coastal marshes on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. The pilot program will be conducted at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to determine the feasibility of removing this exotic species and restoring the badly damaged marsh ecosystem.

APHIS personnel conducted a gull damage management project for the National Audubon Society on Jenny Island in Casco Bay near Portland, Maine, to allow roseate terns and common terns to reestablish nesting colonies there. Last year, 12 pairs of roseate terns and 1,068 pairs of common terns nested on the 3-acre island making it the third largest tern nesting colony in Maine.

APHIS worked closely with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Black Bear Conservation Committee, and other agencies to increase public awareness about the Louisiana black bear, a Federally listed threatened species in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Emphasis was placed on publicizing the importance of reporting black bear conflicts rather than harming offending bears.

Wildlife damage management classes and guest lectures were provided to graduate and undergraduate classes at several universities including the University of Georgia, Clemson University, West Virginia University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Auburn University, Mississippi State University, Louisiana State University, Rutgers University, University of Vermont, and the University of Tennessee. These communications have been very well received by both students and faculty and have been very successful in educating future wildlife management biologists in the importance of addressing wildlife-human conflicts in a professional and responsible manner.

APHIS personnel also conducted activities for the protection and recovery of the endangered Puerto Rican parrot in the Caribbean National Forest in Puerto Rico. Activities focused on the abatement of parrot predation by the exotic mongoose.

Protecting Property

Humans and wildlife continue to compete for habitat as both populations continue to increase. In FY 1998, APHIS provided technical assistance to approximately 60,000 individuals in urban and suburban areas concerned with wildlife damage to property.

Beaver damage management activities conducted in North Carolina throughout 1998 averted the impending loss of an estimated \$3.8 million in damage to forest and agricultural resources, waterways, and highway infrastructures. The benefit-cost ratio of WS services was 5.8 to 1, or \$5.80 saved for every \$1.00 spent.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources and APHIS expanded their partnership by providing a toll-free telephone service for Indiana residents. The 1-800 Nuisance Wildlife Hotline service went into effect in July 1998. Similar toll-free services are available in Maryland and Wisconsin through cooperative relationships with the Maryland and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources.